

Seat Belts Save Lives!

The second largest cause of fatalities is due to ejection from a vehicle either during a rollover or severe spin out. Persons wearing seat belts cannot be ejected from the vehicle unless the impact is so great as to tear the side of the vehicle off and/or force the vehicle door open (these are very severe impacts that are rarely seen). Deaths due to ejection usually occur when the vehicle rolls over the ejected person, resulting in severe head trauma and/or amputations of limbs. Seventy-five percent of ejected persons die as a result of sustaining major injuries inflicted after the ejection. These statistics were gathered from the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).



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Pickup Truck Fatalities in Indiana

A Case for
Primary
Enforcement



Indiana Pickup Truck Restraint Usage Facts

Pickup truck registrations increased 40 percent between 1990 and 2002, and now represent 24 percent of the registered vehicles on Indiana's roadways. Nearly one out of four Indiana residents is legally permitted to travel across our roadways in their vehicle, free from the required use of a safety belt.

There were 104 occupants killed in pickup trucks on Indiana's roadways in 2002, but 16 fatalities had unknown restraint use recorded on the crash report. Of the 88 people whose restraint use was known, 77.3 percent were riding unrestrained at the time of the fatal crash, compared to 49.8 percent of the unrestrained Indiana occupants killed in passenger cars, sport utilities and vans (of the total 466 where restraint use was known).

Of the 68 unrestrained pickup truck occupant fatalities in Indiana for 2002, 73.5 percent occurred in a rural locale—slightly lower than the national average of 79.9 percent.

A total of 30 pickup truck occupants were ejected during their fatal crash in 2002, and 73.3 percent of those ejected occupants were unrestrained (22 of 30), compared to only 15 percent of restrained pickup truck occupants (3 of 20).

From 2000 to 2002, there were twelve 16-17 year old pickup truck occupants killed. Not one of these young people was wearing a seat belt. Over the past five years, 87.2 percent of killed occupants, age 16-20, were unrestrained when their pickup truck crashed.

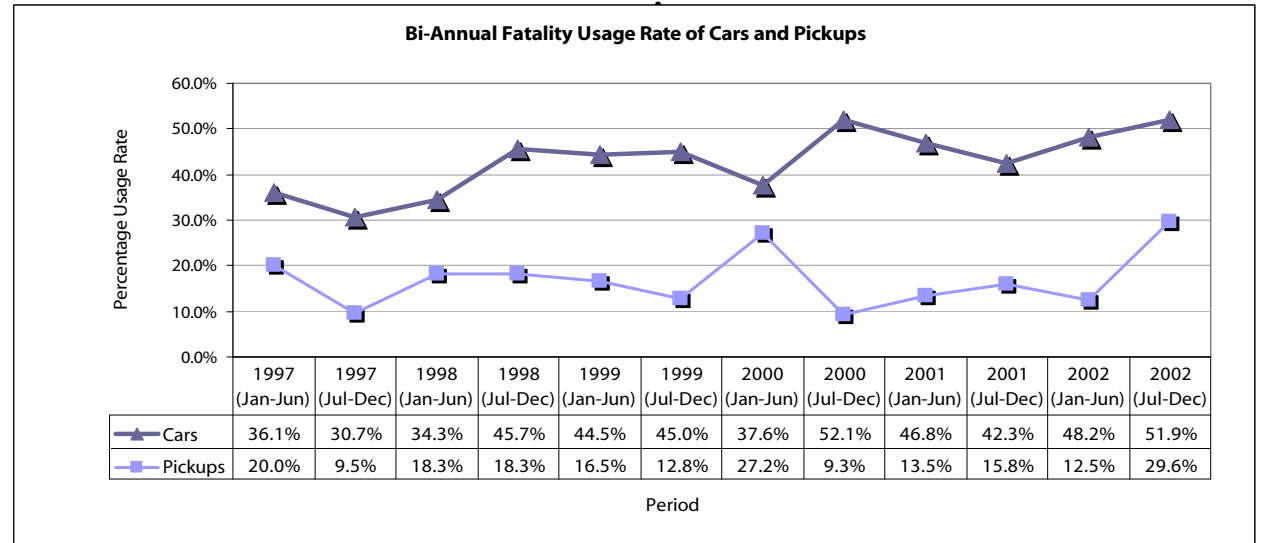
In the past three years, nine of Indiana's pickup truck fatalities were unrestrained children under the age of 16. Four additional children were seriously injured. Four of the nine unrestrained children that were killed were over the age of 11. Thus, they were exempt from Indiana's safety restraint law. As a result, they were legally transported without the necessary restraining device required to protect them in the event of a crash.

In Indiana, if pickup truck restraint usage had achieved 70 percent, approximately 122 lives would have been saved between the years 1999 and 2002. The economic loss to Indiana from these lives alone exceeded \$100 million.

Indiana Restraint Usage Rates for Fatally Injured Drivers

With the enactment of the primary seat belt law in July 1998, the percent of restrained, fatally injured drivers in passenger cars increased from 34.3 percent during the six months between January-June 1998, to 45.7 percent from July-December 1998.

Legislative measures are necessary to reduce the continued and increasing loss of lives on our roadways. Many of the 104 tragic deaths during 2002 were preventable. Our fathers, mothers, sons and daughters died lying on the very roadway in which



During this same time period, pickup trucks remained constant at 18.3 percent, reflecting no change due to the passage of the primary law. Restraint use by killed pickup truck drivers has fluctuated from a low of 9.3 percent during July-December 2000, to the most recent rate of 29.6 percent during the period of July-December 2002.

While the experience of other states has been that pickup occupant usage rates continue to be lower than for occupants of other passenger vehicles, the usage rates for states that do not exclude pickup occupants from their law are far higher than for Indiana. Amending Indiana's law to remove the exclusion for vehicles registered as pickup trucks promises to yield high dividends in the number of lives saved, reductions in injury severity and much lower economic losses from pickup crashes.

In a NHTSA study on economic losses associated with traffic crashes, the average inpatient costs for crash victims who were not restrained were 55 percent higher than for crash victims who were restrained during the crash.

they traveled, having been thrown from the pickup truck in which they were riding, unaware that the few seconds it would have taken to fasten a safety belt could have saved their life.

The State legislature needs to vigorously campaign for the passage of a primary safety belt law that applies to all pickup truck occupants, not just to children, and compliance must be strongly enforced. As a component of the pickup truck law, riding in the cargo area of pickup trucks and passenger vehicles (including SUVs, vans and station wagons) needs to be severely restricted to private property, parades or other similar events, if not prohibited altogether, especially with regard to the 0-16 year-old age group.